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FM AMEMBASSY TASHKENT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0414
INFO RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE
RUEAH/AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT 4395
RUEHTA/AMEMBASSY ASTANA 0611
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C O N F I D E N T I A L TASHKENT 001188

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/CEN AND DRL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/16/2018
TAGS: PHUM PGOV PREL SOCI UZ
SUBJECT: UZBEKISTAN: INVESTIGATION CONCLUDES THAT ACTIVIST
WAS NOT TORTURED

REF: A. TASHKENT 947
 1B. TASHKENT 1138
 1C. TASHKENT 1163

Classified By: POLOFF R. FITZMAURICE FOR REASONS 1.4 (B, D)

¶1. (U) On October 14, a court in Karakalpakstan announced that an investigation had determined that the health of human rights activist Akzam Turgunov did not suffer as a result of a police officer pouring boiling water on his back during pre-trial detention. Turgunov was originally arrested in July and has been charged with extortion by a court in the town of Mangit in Karakalpakstan. Observers maintain that the charges against him are politically-motivated (ref A). Turgunov's trial, which was delayed in late September pending the results of the investigation, recommenced on October 15 and is expected to conclude on October 17.

¶2. (C) Turgunov's lawyer, Rustam Tulyganov, told poloff that he was disappointed with the investigation's conclusion. He argued that Lieutenant Colonel Karim Berdiev, who reportedly poured the boiling water on Turgunov's back, should be prosecuted and imprisoned for up to five years. Tulyganov added that the prosecutor on October 15 requested that Turgunov receive a sentence of 13 years' imprisonment. An interview with Tulyganov was posted on October 15 on Radio Free Europe's ozodlik.org website. Erk opposition party member Dilorom Ishakova, who is monitoring Turgunov's trial, told poloff that she had seen Turgunov's burns, which she described as extensive (ref B).

¶3. (C) Comment: While not surprising, the news that the court's investigation failed to conclude that Turgunov had been mistreated in prison is disappointing, especially considering that another human rights activist, journalist Salidjahon Abdurakhmanov, was sentenced in Karakalpakstan on October 10 to ten-years' imprisonment on drug charges (ref C). We will continue to follow Turgunov's trial closely and raise our concern with Uzbek officials.

NORLAND